

# A Symphony of Vibrating Strings

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Summary: "...Thus, when I awoke outside on a warm, muggy day, blades of grass pricking my cheek, with no memory at all of how I could have gotten there, I calmly sat up and observed my surroundings."

Semi-self insert garbage. An attempt at realism, I guess? Disclaimer for the whole story: I own nothing.

## A Symphony of Vibrating Strings

I had always been a practical girl.

While others would panic, my emotions would shut down until I could sort through them at a more convenient time. This wasn't due to any super-logical-mindedness; rather, it was a coping mechanism for my many undiagnosed but definitely existing anxiety disorders. Act first, process later. Repression at its finest.

Thus, when I awoke outside on a warm, muggy day, blades of grass pricking my cheek, with no memory at all of how I could have gotten there, I calmly sat up and observed my surroundings.

A wall of bark drew my attention. My wide eyes followed the tree upâ€"

â€"and upâ€"

â€"and up. \_

My mouth dropped open as I craned by head back. "Oh...shit," I said softly.

Several yards before me loomed a monolith of nature. A trunk big enough to fit a house in. The bark-sheathed tower rose hundreds of feet, straight and unblemished, until impossibly thick branches bristled out horizontally, criss-crossing like highways with limbs from other behemoth-trees. Blue sky peeked like far-off rivers between leafy boughs. Sunshine cast the canopy on-high into a

cheerful lime.

\_This isn't Michigan,\_ I realized in the same way one realized their home had burned down while they were out: shocked, numb despair.\_ How am I not in Michigan?\_

Terror curled around my heart.

Bracing my hands on my knees, I drew my feet under myself and stood. I felt shaky, but only from emotion. I traced my fingertips over my pale forearms. No track-marks or pinpricks. If I'd been kidnapped, drugs didn't seem very likely. I wasn't even hungry. Pulling out the collar of my T-shirt, I looked down, and then shifted my hips, feeling for anything off.

Nothing. No mysterious bruises or aches or...anything at all. My throat was a little scratchy, and I had a slight headache, but that had been going on for weeks. Everyone on campus had it.

\_I think...I fell asleep at my desk...?\_

Yes. That was the last thing I remembered. I had returned home for the weekend, and worked into the early morning on the line art for a painting. The assignment was "nature," specifically flora and landscapes, \_not \_fauna. Not my expertise. My fore- and middle-ground consisted mostly of flowers; I tried to insinuate human shapes in how they were arranged. A little experiment in subliminal messaging.

"This is just so bizarre..." I whispered, hesitant to breach the silence. Confusion clouded my mind like a tangible ailment.

I blinked in realization.

Unnatural, ominous silence pressed like hands over my ears. Where were the insects, the woodland animals? Not even the plants rustled. Gargantuan trees blocked the wind.

I hugged myself despite the summer heat. (How was it so warm in a forest? How high must the temperature be \_outside \_of this place?) I wondered, briefly, if I was dreaming. Impossibleâ€"there were too many sensory details that dreams skipped. \_Could the silence be caused by predators...? \_Stumbling in an awkward circle, I examined the forest for,\_ I don't know\_, perfectly-preserved mountain lion tracks, or the gouges of bear-claws on bark...

A shiver crept up my spine. Goosebumps rose on my arms.

In the center of the small clearingâ€"really just the normal space between these larger-than-life treesâ€"a dark patch of dead, withered grass marred the Earth, perfectly in the shape of a fallen woman.

\_Like a chalk-outline of a body, but made with death.\_

The grass bowed flat all around the scorched outline, as if blown by fierce winds from that single point. The detritus of a forest, leaves and sticks and things, were nowhere to be seen. The air smelled strongly of soil, likely due to the bald patches revealed whenever...\_this \_happened.

"If this is a prank," I said, my voice weak, not truly trying to puncture the unfathomable silence, "then I am so taking legal action."

The void swallowed my words.

Old tales of people being spirited away filled my head. My breath came fast. I didn't believe in ghosts or magic or anything else of the occult, but I did believe in angels and demons. If someone on campus pulled out a Ouija board, nope, I was going home.

My heart raced. Terror quivered in my stomach. I whipped my head around, searching for any sign of civilization, anything. A sudden, powerful itch possessed my muscles.

I needed to go.

My legs propelled me from the clearing.

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><p>Common sense screeched its nails down a proverbial chalkboard.<p>

Dammit. I can't do this. Grinding my teeth, I stumbled to a halt. Fear and dread shivered over my skin. It had felt so good to run. But I had to think. Darting off aimlessly could get me killed.

Where's your cool, Amy?\_

Sweat beaded my upper lip. I stomped back to the clearing, trying to galvanize myself with anger. As I drew closer, I edged toward a tree warily, as if it could offer me protection.

The flattened grass. Oppressive, gaping silence. The heavy, humid air, untouched by life's breeze. Shafts of sunlight lanced down into my clearing, illuminating pearlescent curls of mist.

The blackened outline of my body.

I trembled despite the heat of day. My skin crawled as if something evil hovered in the clearing. I knew it was all in my head. (I hoped it was all in my head.)

Deep breath in...and out.

Think.

How do I survive in the wild?\_

When I was little, Mom had told me to stay put if I got lostâ€"that way people could find me.

Definitely not. I needed to find a water source. Without food I could

maybe last a week. Without water I had two days, if I remembered correctly. Civilization clustered around rivers and such. \_And...I think I need to go downhill...? Water flows down, and it's easier on the body.\_

I looked around, hoping to see an obvious decline in the land.

Trees. Trees everywhere, like the walls of a maze. It would be impossible to go in a straight line. Navigating by the stars was also out, and I even remembered enough from my old Earth-Space class to do so. The ground rose and fell sharply between the towers of bark. \_Because of the roots...? Or is it naturally craggy?\_

\_Difficult terrain, \_whispered the D&D corner of my brain. \_Move at half-speed.\_

Perhaps I was at the foot of a mountain. Not that I knew anything about geography; I always took the history classes instead.

A whine caught in my throat. \_A mountain. Oh, God.\_ I looked up at the sky, or what little I could see of it. I'd never been one for praying, but if there was ever a time...\_ Where am I? Please keep me safe. Oh, God.\_

Now I was just panicking. Stupid girl.

Okay. Water. Downhill. Everywhere seemed about even, so I'd just have to keep an eye out for streams or something. Moving generally in one direction would be good. Going in circles would suck. \_If only I had a compass.\_

\_Isn't moss supposed to grow on the North side of trees...?\_

After backing away from the edge of the barren clearingâ€”I didn't want to turn my back on itâ€”I examined the underbrush around me, which grew abundantly. Bushes displayed colorful dots of berries and flowers. Tiny white mushrooms peppered walls of bark like shelves, and parasitic-looking vines climbed the trunks. Damp, dead leaves carpeted the forestâ€”less than I might have expected. (It would be \_awesome \_if this was an arboretum or something. Maybe I could find a caretaker.) Small trees reached for the sun, struggling to live. Vines wreathed the ground.

I recognized none of them. I didn't even see poison ivy.

There was also no moss. Bummer. I wiped my hands down my face in frustration, then cast a paranoid glance toward the clearing. Nothing had changed, although I had half-expected it.

An idea occurred to me. My expression brightened.

\_I might not be able to stay here... \_I emptied my pockets, examining what I had to work with. \_But Mom had a good point. I should leave a marker of some sort so they'll know I was here. \_"They" being my imaginary search party.

I thought of the viscerally disturbing black mark, just out of sight. \_That doesn't countâ€”it's a freaky piece of voodoo or something which could be utterly unrelated to me, to an outside

perspective.\_

The pocketknife Daddy gave me for Christmasâ€”invaluable, if I could muster enough ingenuity. A spare container of pencil lead, the size of my pinky. Driver's licence, student ID, and debit card. Gas station receipt. Three quarters, a dime, and half a dozen pennies. Raspberry chapstick. A spare hairband.

No phone, obviously. \_That \_was charging in my bedroom. Like a useless thing.

A swell of bitterness washed over me. "Probably wouldn't have service anyway," I said, trying to make myself feel better. It didn't work.

On TV, a marker left by a kidnapped person would be a strip from their brightly-colored clothing, usually tied around a low tree-branch. My printed T-shirt was grey, my jeans dark blue. Nothing that would stand out.

\_Something reflectiveâ€?"\_

\_My jewelry... \_I touched the gold, heart-shaped stud in my ear. My heart clenched at the thought of abandoning one of them. These, too, were a gift from Daddy. I also had a silver ring from my sister. Tiny black diamonds glittered at me from my finger. Who knew when I would even see them again...?

A chill passed through my heart. \_I'll just have to use something else.\_

Struck by inspiration, I held the crumpled gas station receipt aloft. Stark white, waxy paper. It had gone through the wash once, rendering it unreadable. It would do just fine. I could use the hairband to tie it in place. It even had some hairs tangled on it, which could be used for a DNA test.

And if I was using paper anyway...

Feeling around my ponytail, I drew my mechanical pencil from my hair. In clear, blocky lettering, I wrote:

My name is Amy Patricia Wilson.

>I am lost. I don't know where I am or how I got here. Please help!<br>This is my address:

>1173 Maple Avn.<br>Elmerton, Michigan  
>48001<br>United States of America

It read like a dog's collar, and I'd poked the lead through the receipt in a couple of places, but...whatever. Better than nothing. I had considered writing a description of myselfâ€”age and coloring and whatnotâ€”but I had my driver's licence and student ID for verifying my identity, should I be found.

Entering the clearing for the last time, I looked for a suitable place to plant my marker. My searching eyes landed upon one of those vines clinging to a tree. A splash of artificial white would stand out against the brown.

I squeezed the hairband between the coarse vine and bark, then

paused. \_If this is to help someone find meâ€"what if I\_ was \_kidnapped? What if I'm found by the wrong people? \_Huffing angrily, I secured the waxy scrap of paper to the vine. \_Then I'm screwed anyway. May as well grasp at straws.\_

\_However...if I'm leaving a note, why not leave something less likely to be ruined by nature?\_

I wrapped my ponytail into a bun atop my head and stabbed the pencil through it, securing it in place. It was too hot and humid to bother with my heavy blanket of hair on my neck. Then I flipped open my pocket knifeâ€"already useful. Although this would be hell on the blade.

Planting a hand on the massive trunk, I leaned in for leverage and carved a wobbling arrow below the marker. I used the shorter of the two knives, hoping to keep the longer one keen. The bark scraped my knuckles multiple times. Perhaps there was a better way than clutching it in my fist and dragging the blade over the tree like a caveman, but if there was, I didn't know of it.

Stepping back once more, I examined my handiwork.

"It'll do."

I squared my shoulders. Fear burned a hole in my heart, but nevertheless I marched in the direction I had carved the arrow.

\_Water. Downhill. Don't go in circles.\_

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><p><strong>End chapter one.<strong>

Reviews are appreciated! Was this too long? I always feel that my works are too long.

Don't worry...ninja will come in soon.

I call this semi-self insert garbage because Amy isn't me, not at all, but she's \_based \_off of me, so... Also, that address isn't real. I made it up.

End  
file.